

Interview with Digital/Organizing (Switzerland)

1. Your work, briefly.

Digital/Organizing has been passionately committed to a just and ecological society for years and is firmly rooted in the political sphere. We always see ourselves as partners who work transparently and honestly with clients to achieve common goals. We apply these principles to our own work as well.

Our employees come from parties or movements on the left of the political spectrum. Together with our clients, we want to change the world for the better. That's why we only work with organisations that share our goals. We are united by the conviction that technology and campaigning are most effective where they support genuine social change.

2. What hostile actors do well.

Several things that can be summarized under the heading "no risk, no reward." They have the courage to quickly try out new platforms, formats, and technologies—there are practically no ideological blinders. Likewise, they are not afraid to simplify arguments and reduce graphic design to a minimum (see Swiss People's Party SVP posters). One could call it the courage to embrace the ugly.

3. The opportunity for unions.

The greatest opportunity for unions lies in the potential of technology to mobilise people. Our thesis: Right-wing groups rarely manage to mobilise large numbers of people, even through technology. Who would want to hand out flyers on the street for lower corporate taxes? Left-wing forces and unions, on the other hand, can unleash "people power" using technology. For example: distributing flyers (with a flyer tool), petitions (appeal for care workers, 8 weeks of vacation for apprentices, etc.), sending out voting reminders (via a mobilisation platform), etc.

4. Where it's easy, where it's hard.

Collaboration works well where there are lean structures with short decision-making processes. It becomes difficult in unions with many silos and large committees and boards: Here, decisions are often delayed so much that campaigns and projects barely gain momentum or are diluted by too many rounds of alignment. Of course, finances also play a role: Those with more money are more likely to be able to afford to try new things.

5. What unions misunderstand.

Technology does not replace strategy, it is always a tool for achieving strategic goals. This means not simply using social media to post pretty images, but always with a strategic goal in mind.

Another misconception is that technology only works in the digital realm. In reality, it's an interplay between online and offline. It's always a tool for achieving real offline impact – for example, someone putting up a flag, distributing flyers, or going voting. Digital tools can also be scaled more easily.

6. Being better partners.

The key is to build campaign teams with high levels of expertise and genuine decision-making power. This also means: informing early, preparing structurally for campaign work, and involving the right people with mandate and expertise from the outset, instead of distributing decisions across multiple committees and boards.

7. Preparing for the future.

A good example is the Swiss Trade Union Federation (SGB), which joins forces for campaigns – especially referendum campaigns – within the fragmented trade union landscape. It already boasts short decision-making processes and a high level of campaign expertise, including in the digital sphere. Overall, the goal is to combine forces and resources instead of scattering them across numerous individual organisations.

8. What Unions 21 could do.

All of this together: connecting unions with service providers, connecting unions with each other, and above all, supporting the cultural and structural change necessary for the introduction of such tools. The focus should clearly be on the latter.

(Translation from German assisted by Google Gemini)